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ABSTRACT

This study investigated: (1) the early efforts of agricultural extension to provide educational opportunities for Wyoming settlers at the turn of the century; and (2) the establishment of the Cooperative Extension Service in 1914. The study was primarily an archival and library review of published and unpublished documents, with major emphasis placed on primary sources. The study found that University of Wyoming agricultural officials, prior to 1905, relied primarily on the mail service for the dissemination of knowledge to adults living on farms and ranches. The results of extensive experimentation and research done on experimental farms were provided to rural adults via bulletins, the "Ranchman's Reminder," later called the "Wyoming Farm Bulletin." Agricultural personnel also handled a tremendous amount of correspondence dealing with questions on farming methods and the raising of stock. In 1904 the first short course for ranchers and farmers was offered at the university, and in 1909 demonstration farms were established. Farmers' institutes began in 1905, and in 1909 the first movable schools of agriculture (short courses) were held in Wyoming. An institute train, the Ranchman's Special, was equipped with agricultural exhibits, equipment, machinery, and instructors. It was introduced in 1909, and stopped at 19 places. In 1912 an agreement was signed between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture that provided for cooperative farm management studies, and in 1914 the Smith Lever Act was passed, enabling states to conduct cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics. Thereafter, organized agricultural extension in Wyoming grew rapidly. (KC)

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AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION: PIONEER EDUCATOR OF FARMERS AND RANCHERS

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to summarize the findings of a study which investigated (1) the early efforts of agricultural extension to provide educational opportunities for Wyoming settlers at the turn of the century and (2) to illustrate events leading up to the establishment of the Cooperative Extension Service in 1914.

Rationale

Concern has been expressed at the general lack of historical studies in the field of education, especially in the education of non-traditional students (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Long, 1976; Darkenwald, 1976; Selman, 1976). Educators do not have sufficient knowledge concerning the history of adult education (Hentchel & Hilton, 1983). History provides people with a sense of continuity in their efforts, points out errors, draws attention to successes and, in general, gives a sense of unity (Nevins, 1962). Past values and traditions could be helpful in the shaping of current views and in the prediction of future trends.

Purpose

The University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. At a significant time like this it seems appropriate to pause and look back at the historical antecedents of an institution that played such a major role in the provision of educational opportunities for the people of Wyoming.

At the turn of the century pioneers in Wyoming had extensive learning needs. Large numbers of settlers who knew very little about stockraising or agriculture in general came to Wyoming through the homesteading program. Evidence indicates that they lacked both farming skills and cultural enrichment (Brady, 1900; Eighteenth Annual Report of the Wyoming Experiment Station, 1907). The purpose of this paper is to describe the earlier efforts on behalf of agricultural extension to help settlers to survive both physically and culturally and to illustrate the events that lead up to the establishment of the Cooperative Extension Service in 1914 (Ranchman's

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Reminder, 1905; Annual Reports, 1907, 1912; Wyoming Farm Bulletin, 1914; Proceedings of the American Association of Farmers Institute Workers, 1914).

Method

This study was primarily an archival and library review of published and unpublished documents regarding the early history of agricultural extension in Wyoming. Major emphasis was placed on primary sources such as university documents, newspapers, and private collections which were located mainly in the Wyoming State Archives, the University of Wyoming Archives, the Coe Reference and Documents Department on the campus and in the Registrar's office. An extensive analysis was done of the annual reports of early directors of the Wyoming Experiment Station and the presidents of the University. University library records, circulars, pamphlets and newspaper clippings in individual collections provided valuable information. A systematic review of *University Catalogues,* the *Wyoming School Journal,* the *Ranchman's Reminder* and the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* was also done.

Limitations: In doing a historical study, the researcher is always limited to sources which are available. The limitation for this research project was the fact that some of the sources and data necessary for the study was hidden in boxes of unclassified and unsorted documents. Going through this material systematically, proved to be an extremely time consuming task. Chances are, in a situation like this, that some sources could have been missed.

Research Findings

At the turn of the eighteenth century Wyoming still lay virtually undiscovered by white Americans, and it was not before 1853 that the first white settlers came to the territory (Baker, 1908). With the building of the Union Pacific large numbers of settlers came, and as the railroad was making its way westward, towns came into being alongside the line (Cheyenne Daily Leader, 1869; Bartlett, 1918).

The University of Wyoming was established in 1886 as a result of appropriations made by the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Land Act of 1881. Pioneer years were difficult. Reaching citizens living in remote areas proved to be a major problem. The university realized from the beginning

that farmers and ranchers were desperately in need of agricultural education (Eighteenth Annual Report,1908), but it was not until January 10, 1891, when an act of the Legislature of Wyoming placed the control of the appropriations from the Morrill and Hatch Acts into the hands of the Board of Trustees, that the first attempt could be made to disseminate agricultural information to the rural population. With this funding available, the university was able to establish an experiment station and six sub-stations, and agricultural personnel began to study the special problems connected with arid and high altitude lands (Sixteenth Annual Report, 1906).

Creation and Dissemination of Educational Materials

Since Wyoming was a pioneering state, agricultural knowledge regarding farming and ranching under Wyoming conditions did not exist. Knowledge thus had to be "created" through research and experimentation before it could be carried out to the farmers and ranchers of the state. As results of research became available, it was published and distributed to rural adults by way of Bulletins (See Appendix for examples of research), and through a monthly journal called the *Ranchman's Reminder*. (Its name was changed to the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin* in 1911). By 1913 the circulation was reported to be 11,500. Educational efforts were geared towards solving questions in the "interests of the ranchman and the farmer, so that they might intelligently cultivate such crops as may be successfully grown"(Fifth Annual Report, 1895, p. 29).

Evidence indicates that agricultural officials carried a heavy load. Not only were they teaching in the College, but they also had to do research, write informational bulletins, handle a great deal of correspondence (Thirteenth Annual Report, 1903), and go out on regular expeditions to gather information which could be passed on to the farmers and ranchers of Wyoming (First Annual Report, 1891, Sixth Annual Report, 1896; Eighth Annual Report, 1898; University Catalogue, 1903). Dr. Aven Nelson, professor of botany, reported in 1896 that three such expeditions were carried out that year. In collecting this information, he and his colleagues traveled 1,600 miles by rail, 184 miles by stage, and about 275 miles with camp outfits.

Evidence indicates that the spread-out nature of the population and the vast distances to travel, left faculty members no choice but to resort to the mail service to reach individuals living in

remote areas. Up till 1904 educational efforts for farmers and ranchers remained geared towards the writing and distribution of educational bulletins, press releases and the publication of the Ranchman's Reminder. Unpublished documents report that "hundreds of personal letters were being written," pertaining to soil conditions, the handling of various crops, and kinds of animals to use for dairying (Bowman, 1915, p. 3). It appears that the experiment staff regarded it as their proper function even though it was an extremely time consuming task (Annual Reports, 1910; 1915).

Short Courses for Farmers and Ranchers

An important step in desseminating agricultural knowledge was taken when the first short course for farmers and ranchmen was offered by the university in March, 1904 (Thirteenth Annual Report, 1904). Described as a "regular system of instruction, usually by lecture and laboratory methods" (Ranchman's Reminder, 1905, p. 15), the short course filled a specific educational need of farmers, ranchers and their wives. Evidence indicates that it was, since its inception in 1904, very well attended. At the first short course 173 students signed up to learn about irrigation and stock management. Governor Brooks, who also attended the first short course, recommended that it "be put on wheels," so that more people could benefit from it. As a result of his efforts the 1905 Wyoming Legislature made an appropriation of $2,000 to pay for farmers' institutes to be held in different parts of the state.

Farmers Institutes

In 1905 the *Ranchman* promised that "wherever a group of farmers or ranchmen can be gathered together for a few days of conference on the subject of stock judging, stock feeding, irrigation, and the like, university professors will be sent to lecture and conduct practical demonstrations" (Ranchman's Reminder, 1905 p. 15). This invitation resulted in the first farmers' institute being held on March 29, 30, and 31, 1905 in Cody (Fifteenth Annual Report, 1905), a town 360 miles from Laramie. It was reported that in spite of the season being "somewhat advanced for institute work, as nearly all the ranchmen in the neighborhood of Cody had begun spring's work," the attendance was "remarkably good" (Ranchman's Reminder, 1905, p. 28).

Seven sessions were held, with 70 farmers and ranchers attending during the day, and 200 in the evening. Evening lectures were illustrated by stereopticon views. An extended institute tour was offered from February 20 to March 13, 1906. The agricultural team apparently had to travel more than 400 miles by stage and wagon, and a thousand miles by rail in reportedly bad weather conditions to conduct these institutes. According to the *Ranchman*, the men were fortunately able to survive:

> four-horse run-aways, narrow escapes from wrecks and tipovers, occasional but real hostile people, travel through a vast unsettled territory in an unusual blizzard, mountain passes filled with snow drifts, frozen faces and chilled feet, forty mile rides with the temperature below zero in wind and snow and of some meals absent and other grateful ones of Indian cookery and horse meat" (_Ranchman's Reminder, 1906, p. 21).

The first lecture for women at a farmers' institute was presented at a Wheatland Institute, held November 21-23, 1907 (Eighteenth Annual Report, 1908). When professor Minna Stoner, the then head of the home economics department, spoke to the women on the topic of "Domestic Science and Education," she made home economics history. Her presentation became the unofficial start of the university's home economics extension work and it was the first that the latest knowledge in homemaking was brought directly to women. This institute also represented the University's first use of the "family approach" in extension work. County institutes from then on usually included a speaker carrying an educational message to women.

By 1915 the university had reached the point where they could say that "there are few towns in Wyoming now that have not at some time had a farmers' institute" (University Catalogue, 1915, p. 114). Demands for meetings were so numerous, however, that it was "taxing the resources of the extension division and the agricultural college faculty and experiment station staff to meet them." It was promised, however, that requests would be met as far as possible, "in the order they are received" (University Catalogue, 1915, p. 114). Even though 26 more towns were reached during 1915 than the previous year, the university was still not able to fulfill all the requests that they had received (Wyoming Farm Bulletin, 1915).

Movable Schools of Agriculture

In the 1908-1909 Catalogue the university announced that it was contemplating an enlargement of the farmers' institute system by conducting, for a week or more, a short school of agriculture in the larger agricultural centers in Wyoming. The idea was that such schools would take the place of short courses at the university. By bringing the school to the students, rather than expecting them to come to the school, the University was hoping to improve its services to the people of the State. The first three such schools of agriculture were held at Wheatland, Basin, and Buffalo in Bebruary 1910 and had a total attendance of 2,125.

The Institute Train

The institute train was another variation of the farmers' institute. Basically the idea was to equip a train with exhibits, equipment, and machinery, as well as instructors and speakers, and send it along the railway lines to the various parts of the state. The train was to stop for a predetermined time period at each station, and could take a week or even two weeks to complete its journey through the state (Towar, 1908).

The university planned to have various professors traveling with the train in order to give lectures and demonstrations. Consisting of two passenger cars, a baggage car, and two private cars for the accommodation of those accompanying the train, the Ranchman's Special, as this train was called, made 19 stops which allowed a reported 3,700 persons to view the exhibits and to listen to the lectures on dry land agriculture. Short talks were given to people as they passed through the cars, and at two or three places informal lectures were given in the towns during the evening. The idea of an educational train was so well received that the university, upon completion of the tour, decided to make arrangements to operate similar trains over other railroad line in the state (Towar, 1910).

Demonstration Farms

At about the time that the university had made the decision to"bring the school to the student" by way of short courses in different counties, President Merica made the observation that there was much demand from the part of the settlers in all the newly colonised districts for definite

scientific instruction that they can use at once. However, with the funds available for extension, the university was unable to meet this demand. As a possible solution the president then suggested that demonstration farms be established at various places so that farmers of that area could see what the agricultural possiblities were for that specific part of the state (President's Report to the Board of Trustees, 1909-1910). He saw it as a necessity to help the thousands of people who were coming to settle in the state every year. These demonstration farms would not be sub-stations owing anything to the federal government, but it would be conducted under the direct supervision of the agricultural college and be supported by state funds. He emphasized that the university would not engage in the kind of research work as was being carried on by the federal government, "which often took years to reach the farmer", but would instead "undertake to discover and publish just what can be done at these places and how to do it" (Ranchman's Reminder, Aug., 1910, p. 5). The farms will not be experiment stations but rather farms where owners, under the guidance of experts of the university, will try to grow the largest possible crop with the least expense, and thus demonstrate to fellow farmers what practical techniques could be implemented. Apparently several farmers cooperated with the University in this project. A report issued in 1916 by the Department of County Agricultural Agents, mentioned that the State leader had visited ten demonstration farms during that year (Wyoming Farm Bulletin, 1916).

Cooperative Extension Service

It should be noted that interest in extension work was growing throughout the United States at the turn of the century. From time to time federal appropriations were made to supplement state funding for agricultural education. An important step was taken in 1912 when an agreement was drawn up between the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture, providing for cooperative farm management studies and field demonstrations. It was agreed that the salary and expenses of a state leader and an assistant state leader would be shared by both parties.

In an article which appeared in a 1913 *Sheridan Post,* D. W. Working, who was, at that time, in charge of farm management, explained the task of county agriculturists as follows:

> We are required to work with farmers -- to study with them rather than to study for them, so we become partners with the farmers to whom we are sent. They give us facts; we give them facts; and then they and we try to find the meaning of the facts as they may apply for good or harm on the farmer's own farm (Sheridan Post, Jul. 22, 1913).

Sketching the characteristics of a good county agriculturist, Working listed the following qualifications and personal characteristics as being indispensable:

> He is a man who must know the farm from the farmer's standpoint, who must know the sciences that serve agriculture, from the standpoint of the scientist, and who must have the gift of gumption that enables a man to translate sound theory into correct practice.
>
> Having found a man so prepared for service and having the graces of spirit, and the graciousness of manner that enables the man of learning to win and retain the liking and respect of dogs and children and common men -- then we have a man fit to associate on an equal basis with farmers and others interested in better agriculture and more wholesome life in the country.
>
> He is a man who prefers not to give advice, choosing rather to present the facts that every man may be his own advisor. He prefers not to tell men how to do things, choosing rather to ask questions and to offer hints that will lead every man to discover the how for himself (Editor, Wyoming Farm Bulletin, Sept., 1915, p. 4).

On May 13, 1913 A. L. Campbell was appointed as the first County Agent in Wyoming (University Catalogue, 1914; Laramie Baily Boomerang, Jan. 29, 1915). It was reported that he had a geat deal of energy and an engaging personality which soon won the respect, confidence, and cooperation of the farmers and ranchers in Fremont County. During the first year of his appointment, he travelled 5,208 miles by train, horseback, buggy, and motorcycle building up a total cost of $552.65. His first annual report showed that 1,902 miles were done by motorcycle, 1,118 miles by team and saddle horse, 2,078 miles by railroad, and 110 miles by automobile (Bowman, 1915). Mr. Campbell had brought "enthusiasm to the farmers and had succeeded in introducing many new methods which have proven to be profitable for the farmer" (University Catalogue, 1914, p. 104). A second county agent, H. E. McCartney, was appointed on July 11, 1913 and assigned to work in Sheridan County (Twenty-Third Annual Report, 1912). In 1914 Allen Tedmon became the County Agent for both Big Horn and Washakie Counties. This did not work out and after a seven months trial he was assigned exclusively to Big Horn (Laramie Daily Boomerang, Jan. 29, 1915).

In 1914 a major breakthrough for education occurred when the Smith-Lever Act was passed, which provided money for the states and territories to conduct cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics. The State of Wyoming was to receive $10,000 for the year beginning July 1, 1914, with an increase of $1,249.20 per year for seven years. Albert Bowman became the Director of the Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service, and immediately started to assemble a competent staff of subject matter specialists to work amongst the farm and ranch people, and to assist county agents as they were appointed in various counties. In September 1914, Blanche M. Olin was appointed as state demonstrator in home economics and through demonstrations, lectures, and discussions she helped to educate large numbers of women regarding better home practices. The rationale for this appointment was explained in the *Catalogue* (1915):

> Believing that the prosperity and happiness of a home depend as much upon the skill and intelligence of women as upon the earning power of men, a Home Economics demonstrator has been added to the agricultural extension force. She demonstrates labor saving devices, household decoration, and methods of preparing foods, balance rations, home dressmaking etc. She works with women in clubs and meetings and individually. (p. 114)

In addition to the three county agents, A. L. Campbell, H. E. McCartney, and Allen Tedmon, Wyoming now had four people who were devoting all their time to extension work.

In 1915 President Duniway reported that it was still "too early to speak confidently in detail on the results of this system of extension work which has been stimulated by and founded upon the Smith-Lever Act." In his opinion success depended more upon the "qualifications and character of the individual county agents than upon any other one factor" (President's Annual Report, 1915, p. 8). In his next Annual Report he made the remark that even though the work cannot be reduced to statistics, a "striking development had occurred over the past two years" (President's Annual Report, 1916, p. 21). Further presidential reports reaffirmed that the educational effort as exerted by Cooperative Extension was "growing in magnitude and importance from year to year" (President's Annual Report, 1919, p. 19).

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, evidence indicates that University of Wyoming agricultural officials, prior to 1905, relied primarily on the mail service for the dissemination of knowledge to adults living on

farms and ranches. The results of extensive experimentation and research done on various experimental farms were provided to rural adults by way of bulletins, the *Ranchman's Reminder*, the *Wyoming Farm Bulletin*, and various press releases. Agricultural personnel also handled a tremendous amount of correspondence dealing with questions on farming methods and the raising of stock. In 1904 the first short course for ranchmen and farmers was offered on the campus of the university, and in 1909 a number of farmers were persuaded to convert a part of their properties into demonstration farms. These demonstration units, developed under the direction of agricultural specialists, served as examples of optimum production units in specific areas. Farmers' institutes came into being in 1905 and in 1909 the first movable schools of agriculture were held in Wyoming. These schools, usually conducted over a period of 10 to 14 days, were in essence, off-campus agricultural short courses. An institute train, equipped with agricultural exhibits, equipments, machinery and several instructors, was introduced in 1909 and appeared to be successful as a method of bringing knowledge to rural adults. The Ranchman's Special, as the train was called, stopped at 19 places and 3,700 people were reported as having visited the exhibits and listened to lectures on agricultural matters. In 1912 a cooperative agreement was signed between the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture which provided for cooperative farm management studies and in 1914 the Smith Lever Act was passed which enabled states and territories to conduct cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics. From then on organized agricultural extension in Wyoming grew with rapid strides (President's Annual Report, 1918-1919).

This research suggests that agricultural extension officials were indeed the pioneer educators of farmers and ranchers at the turn of the century. Large numbers of individuals who knew very little about western farming conditions, were taught how to raise livestock and crops on a profitable basis while their spouses received instruction in household management, sanitation, home industries, nutrition and home architecture. Agricultural extension played a major role in fulfilling the educational needs of farmers and ranchers at a time when the lack of knowledge and cultural enrichment was deeply felt.

It is hoped that this study will help to provide a more accurate perspective of the roots of agricultural extension in Wyoming. More research is needed to gain a comprehensive picture of the total role played by agricultural extension in the United States prior to the passing of the Smith Lever Act. We need to determine if similar patterns of development occurred in other states around the turn of the century. By uncovering "new" facts about old existing practices and by challenging existing assumptions, it is believed that new understanding might indeed be brought to the educational problems of today.

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